

COMMITMENTS

For Equity in Education

*Supporting the Nebraska State Board of Education
Strategic Vision and Direction*



2018-2019



A Message From the Commissioner

Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D.

Greetings! The Strategic Vision and Direction of the State Board of Education and of the Nebraska Department of Education outlines five roles that describe our work and how we approach achieving our strategic priorities. Those roles are **Champion**, **Regulator**, **Capacity Builder**, **Connector**, and **Change Agent**. The Champion role stands out to me this year as we engage in unprecedented activities as a state education agency. As we move from an agency that is traditionally focused on regulation and compliance, to one that is focused on leadership, innovation, and learning, we will naturally engage in ways

we have not before. One of the areas we are taking a more active role is related to equity, which led us to this year's NDE theme: **Champions for Equity in Education**.

My call to action is that Nebraska will lead the way in addressing inequities of the past by focusing on opportunities to learn for all students and by adopting a relentless focus on outcomes that ensure all stakeholders deliver on the promise of equity. This statement is supported by our strategic priorities, in particular the one that declares, "Ensure all Nebraskans, across all backgrounds and circumstances, have equitable access and opportunities for success."

Educational equity means that all students have access to the educational resources they need at the right moment, at the right level, and with the right intensity, to not only reach high expectations for learning, but also to discover and explore their passions and make meaningful connections within the context of their postsecondary interests. Equity requires that these opportunities and outcomes exist across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background, adverse events, and/or family income. Equity efforts will ensure that all students are known, heard, and supported while having access to the opportunities and resources needed to be ready for success in their post-secondary learning experiences, careers, and civic lives.

I know that schools and other educational partners are already doing exceptional work with respect to equity in education. We hope to support you through more evident and intentional approaches. For example, we are part of a national conversation on equity in education through our work with the Wallace Foundation and statewide partners in the ESSA Leadership Learning Community (ELLC). Our state team is actively working on a definition of equity that I intend to release soon. Additionally, we are partnering with other statewide education organizations in the release of a statement of principle related to human dignity, including common beliefs about how all people should be treated and specific actions to ensure we implement what we say we believe. I also intend for our agency to examine our rules to ensure that our commitment to equity is reflected, namely in Rule 10, which outlines provisions for the accreditation of schools.

Thank you for embarking on this journey with us as we fulfill our duties to provide leadership for our statewide education system. We are at a point in history where the statement "all students" has to mean what we say and we must be explicit in defining that all means all. The State Board of Education and I will champion that conversation and keep it at the forefront of our mission, to lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living.

Nebraska will lead the way in addressing inequities of the past by focusing on opportunities to learn for all students and by adopting a relentless focus on outcomes that ensure all stakeholders deliver on the promise of equity.

Mission

To lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living.

Strategic Priorities

Ensure that all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success.

Increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life

Our Roles: Champions For Equity in Education

As a state agency, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) will lead for equity in education through intentional and data-informed operationalization of multiple agency roles. These roles include **Champion**, **Regulator**, **Capacity Builder**, **Connector**, and **Change Agent**. With this commitment, districts and educational partners are better equipped to advance educational equity, and there will be an increase in the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in post-secondary education, career, and civic life.



The NDE will **CHAMPION** educational equity by actively leading the strategic vision, goals, and policy direction to support learning, earning, and living for all students.



The NDE will **REGULATE** educational equity by leveraging policy authority to ensure delivery of high-quality, equitable education and services, beyond compliance with state and federal regulations.



The NDE will **BUILD CAPACITY** around educational equity by directing technical assistance and professional development opportunities and by promoting the sharing of best practices.



The NDE will **BUILD CONNECTIONS** in support of educational equity by bridging the divide between learning, earning, and living, connecting schools, families, business, and communities.



The NDE will demonstrate **CHANGE AGENCY** by exploring and supporting promising new innovations that advance educational equity.



Our Approach

Our commitment approach for equity in education is based on the Strategic Vision and Direction three-tiered framework for measuring multiple levels and processes to ensure success through standard, quantifiable metrics, artifacts, and evidence-based analyses.



Service Accountability

Quality and success of services provided by the agency

Increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life.



School and District Accountability

School and agency progress and improvement

Ensure all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success.



Nebraska Department of Education Accountability

Process, regulations, support, interagency collaboration, data systems, fiscal responsibility, and evaluation

Ensure the education system, including the Nebraska Department of Education, are taking charge of roles and responsibilities to provide leadership and enhance school support systems in the state.

COLLEGE, CAREER, AND CIVIC READY *Commitment to Equity*

The Nebraska Department of Education commits to equity of opportunity by ensuring all Nebraskans are college, career, and civic ready.

Activities and Initiatives to Achieve Commitment

reVISION Under the leadership of the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and in partnership with the Nebraska Departments of Labor and Economic Development, reVISION is a year-long process that provides Nebraska schools with the opportunity to analyze and transform their current career education systems. Working in collaboration with postsecondary education and regional workforce/economic development leaders, the reVISION process links career educators, school administrators, school counselors, and industry professionals to improve their ability to educate a qualified workforce that meets industry needs within an ever-changing economy. To learn more, visit: www.education.ne.gov/nce/revision/.



Project SEARCH is a partnership between Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), businesses, area school systems, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Assistive Technology Partnership, and Division of Developmental Disabilities. This one-year school-to-work program is business led and takes place entirely in the workplace. The experience includes a combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. Learn more about this total workplace immersion program: www.vr.nebraska.gov/partners/project_search.html.



Education does not only occur within the walls of the typical classroom. A well-run school utilizes the extended campus of community including business and industry. Quality workplace experiences enable a school to effectively partner with the community to enhance the educational experiences of students. The Nebraska Workplace Experiences website illustrates how workplace experiences become more focused as a student progresses through their education. Students gain a better understanding of their talents, strengths, and interests; learn what postsecondary education is necessary for success; and practice the career readiness and technical skills vital for entering the career of their choice. Visit www.nebraskaworkplaceexperiences.com for tools and resources about Nebraska workplace experiences.



Nebraska's Virtual Industry Tours, found at

www.nebraskacareerclusters.com, provide a unique opportunity for

students, parents, and job-seekers to experience Nebraska-based industries without leaving the home or classroom. Videos showcase different businesses and industries in each of the sixteen Career Clusters in the Nebraska Career Education Model. In addition to the tour of a business or industry, the videos also contain interviews with employees and managers discussing work requirements, education levels, salary, and job prospects.



The purpose of the **Nebraska Social Studies Standards** is to teach students to become young patriots who have an intellectual understanding of the genius of our country's founding principles and who feel an emotional connection to our nation. Achieving

this purpose requires teaching Nebraska students to become responsible citizens who are prepared to preserve, protect, and defend freedom and democracy in our nation and in the world. With recent conversations related to civic readiness, the revision of Nebraska's Social Studies Standards will begin in the fall of 2018. The target date for approval by the Nebraska State Board of Education is December 2019. Visit www.education.ne.gov/socialstudies for more on Social Studies education in the state.

State Board Goal Supporting Commitment




Goal 5.1 By 2018, the State Board will adopt a comprehensive approach to define and measure civic readiness.

ACADEMIC PROGRESS *Commitment to Equity*

The Nebraska Department of Education commits to equity of achievement by measuring and tracking academic progress.

Activities and Initiatives to Achieve Commitment

In 2017, Nebraska's **position statement on the assessment of student learning** was approved. The NDE, "believes schools and districts should utilize a balanced assessment system that includes formative, interim, and summative assessments to inform instruction and program development, monitor progress, and evaluate student learning for all content areas and grade levels."

 **NSCAS** Over the past year, NDE implemented **Nebraska's Student-Centered Assessment System, or NSCAS**, a statewide assessment system that embodies Nebraska's holistic view of students. The system and its supports provide valuable information to schools and districts as they prepare students for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life. There are four components of NSCAS:



FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

A way for Nebraska educators and students to use formal and informal processes and tools during instruction to check for understanding and adjust teaching and learning accordingly.



INTERIM ASSESSMENT

The NDE made an optional interim growth assessment – MAP Growth – available for free to districts to use in concert with other interim assessments of their choice. MAP Growth assessments are adaptive and can be given up to four times a year.



SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

The NSCAS Summative assessment is a new, computer-adaptive statewide assessment replacing the NeSA tests in English language arts and math for grades 3 – 8 and science for grades 5 and 8. The NSCAS ACT is the summative assessment at the high school level and administered for free annually in the spring for all high school juniors. Meeting expectations on the ACT indicates college readiness in Nebraska students.



PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

In addition to existing professional learning opportunities and resources provided by the NDE, districts, and schools, NDE is providing new free, comprehensive professional learning opportunities to districts in partnership with NWEA.

State Board Goals Supporting Commitment



Goal 6.1 By 2018, utilizing baseline data from the ACT, long-term goals will be developed for 11th grade achievement, including goals for subgroups.



Goal 6.2 By 2018, the NDE will implement an assessment system to measure achievement and growth in grades 3-8 that meets the requirements of federal and state law and is timely for instructional purposes.

EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS *Commitment to Equity*

The Nebraska Department of Education commits to equity of access by leading and supporting educator effectiveness.

Activities and Initiatives to Achieve Commitment

DLRT In March of 2018 the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) launched the **Diverse and Learner-Ready Teacher Network (DLRT)**, a network of states working to diversify the education workforce and support future and current educators in effectively teaching students of different cultural backgrounds. Nebraska is one of nine states to participate in this network. The Nebraska DLRT workgroup aims to increase parity between learner and teacher demographics in Nebraska schools through implementation of strategies to proactively recruit, prepare, support, and retain a diverse and culturally-responsive workforce. Future activities will include a Grow Your Own Diversification Expansion initiative and a concerted effort to apply a culturally responsive lens to current statewide educational frameworks and systems.

ELLC | **The ESSA Leadership Learning Community** The NDE is also leading in educator effectiveness through the **ESSA Leadership Learning Community (ELLC)** sponsored by the Wallace Foundation and a newly-redesigned group on Diversifying the Teacher Pipeline with funding and support from CCSSO. The NDE is currently moving into focused stakeholder conversations to further inform development and implementation of a coordinated system to support principals and is partnering with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to conduct research to ensure the system is built according to the professional and contextual needs of Nebraska PK-12 educational leaders and to monitor implementation for purposes of system improvement. The system will be built around Nebraska principals, their needs, and their contexts. Anything less would fall short of NDE's vision to ensure quality educational opportunities in all communities, for all learners, teachers, and leaders.

ADVISER The **Nebraska ADVISER Dashboard** is a web-based view of student and staff data that provides educators with a quick and easy way to personalize instruction and make data-informed decisions. The acronym ADVISER stands for "Advanced Data Views Improving Student Educational Response." The Nebraska ADVISER Dashboard consolidates data from multiple systems which enables educators to efficiently analyze large amounts of information to support student learning and inform teaching practices. Learn more about the ADVISER Dashboard at: www.education.ne.gov/dataservices/education-data-systems/adviser-dashboard/.



High-quality early childhood programs can have a lifelong, positive impact on young children and their families. **Step Up to Quality** helps early child care providers and educators recognize and improve quality. Programs enrolled in Step Up to Quality have access to coaching and resources that help them on their path to higher quality. These resources enable any provider or educator — big or small — to take quality to the next level. Step Up to Quality programs go beyond what is required because they strive to do better for their children's and families' futures. Learn more about the benefits of Step Up to Quality at www.education.ne.gov/stepuptoquality.



Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is a framework that promotes an integrated system connecting general education and special education, along with all components of teaching and learning, into a high quality, standards-based instruction and intervention system that is matched to a student's academic, social-emotional, and behavior needs. MTSS is an essential component of the continuous improvement process. Local school districts and Educational Service Units (ESUs) are a critical part of the Nebraska MTSS framework, supporting multiple improvement efforts with local expertise and unique context. The Nebraska MTSS framework encompasses the concepts of response-to-intervention (RtI), positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), and special education eligibility determination. The MTSS framework is an educational systems change paradigm that provides a construct for supporting students and staff as part of school improvement.

State Board Goal Supporting Commitment



Goal 7.1 By 2018, NDE will develop and implement a statewide teacher equity plan.

QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS *Commitment to Equity*

The Nebraska Department of Education commits to equity of access by supporting quality instructional materials.

Activities and Initiatives to Achieve Commitment



Every Nebraska student deserves the opportunity to learn from high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials to prepare for success in college, career, and civic life. Through the **Nebraska Instructional**

Materials Collaborative, the NDE and key partners are committed to providing statewide leadership that informs and supports the decisions made locally related to curriculum and instructional materials. Together, we can collaborate across districts, organizations, and agencies to ensure success. Check out www.nematerialsmatter.org to learn more about this important resource that advances equity for all students.

FUTURE READY NEBRASKA

Future Ready Nebraska is the state's first ever Digital Learning and Ed Tech Plan. It serves as the framework for innovating student learning experiences and adapts technologies and instruction in ways which meaningfully engage the digital generation. As a result, students have equitable opportunities and teachers are trained to provide digital opportunities that promote critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation. Learn more at: www.education.ne.gov/educational-technology/future-ready-nebraska/.



The **Nebraska OER Hub** is a statewide collaboration between the Nebraska Department of Education, Educational Service Units, school districts, and educators with the goal of curating and creating quality open educational resources that are aligned to Nebraska curriculum. Nebraska OER provides open education awareness, resources, support, and training to all educators in the state. Visit: www.oercommons.org/hubs/nebraska.



NROC, Hippocampus, and EdReady are resources available statewide that include digital curriculum, learning objects, and online personalized learning supports. EdReady specifically provides reinforcement or development of discrete skills in mathematics and English language arts. The online supplemental resource tool for learning provides users with foundational procedural expectations and is provided free as a service by the Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council (ESUCC) to Nebraska schools. Learn more or sign up at www.esucc.org/NROCorEdReady.

State Board Goal Supporting Commitment



Goal 4.1 By 2020, the NDE will develop a statewide digital course and content repository.

ENGAGING NEBRASKANS *Commitment to Equity*

The Nebraska Department of Education commits to equity of access and opportunity by engaging Nebraskans.

Activities and Initiatives to Achieve Commitment

The NDE Office of Data and Research developed the **Stakeholder Engagement and Satisfaction Survey** to gather information from stakeholders about their engagement and satisfaction with the NDE. The results of this survey will help NDE understand ways to support stakeholders and improve services.

In 2014, the NDE developed three **perceptual surveys** that all Nebraska education leaders can request and disseminate to students, parents, and staff in their school or district. The student survey is given to better understand a student's life at school and has had over 29,000 responses so far. The parent survey is a tool used to better understand a parent or guardian's thoughts and feelings about their child(ren) in a particular school with almost 12,500 responses. Finally, the school/district staff survey is delivered to better understand the thoughts and feelings about a particular school as a staff member. This survey has garnered 5,620 responses.



The NDE uses a consistent process to develop and revise content area standards. The goal of this process is to develop K-12 content area standards that, when mastered, would allow a student to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing postsecondary coursework without the need for remediation. The collaborative writing process utilizes the expertise of Nebraska educators and ESU representatives and includes spokespersons from all stages of Nebraska's educational system. The NDE ensures that educators represent

all sizes of schools and all parts of the state. The development process includes opportunities for feedback from business and industry representatives as well as students, local community members, parents, school administrators, and educators not part of the writing process. The 2017 revision of **Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for Science** gave the NDE the opportunity to design and collect a public input survey to obtain feedback from educators, parents, students, and the general public. The online survey ran from May 5 through June 23, 2017. There were 705 respondents who provided input on the science standards, including 446 educators and 149 parents/guardians. Furthermore, the Nebraska Science Specialist went on a three-city media tour with over 10 interviews to promote the survey and to engage all Nebraskans in the learning, earning, and living conversation.

State Board Goal Supporting Commitment



Goal 2.1 By 2019, the NDE will develop a system to regularly engage and survey clients, schools, and stakeholders to gather input and measure engagement and satisfaction.



NEBRASKA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The State Board of Education is an elected, constitutional body that sets policy and ensures that the State Department of Education functions effectively within the framework developed by the state Legislature and the board. By law, the board and the department have broad leadership functions to carry out certain regulatory and service activities. The board is elected on a non-partisan ballot, with one member from each district. Board members serve four-year terms. Board members are not paid, but are reimbursed for their expenses.

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Commissioner of Education

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